

WILLINGHAM
BUCKINGHAM
LEIALOHA

THE
GOOD
PRINCE

VERTIGO

F A B L E S 65



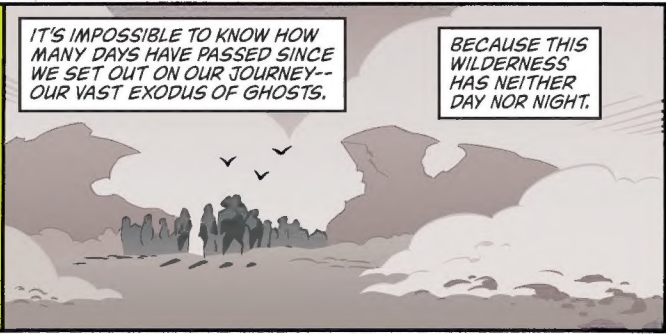
Nov 07
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SOMEWHERE IN AN ENDLESS WASTELAND...



IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO KNOW HOW MANY DAYS HAVE PASSED SINCE WE SET OUT ON OUR JOURNEY--OUR VAST EXODUS OF GHOSTS.

BECAUSE THIS WILDERNESS HAS NEITHER DAY NOR NIGHT.



IF I'VE KEPT AN ACCURATE COUNT, WE'VE PAUSED TO SLEEP THIRTY-SEVEN TIMES SINCE WE BEGAN, SO LET'S CALL IT THIRTY-SEVEN DAYS.



IN ALL OF THAT TIME WE'VE SUFFERED TERRIBLY FROM THE DEMANDS OF OUR NEWLY RESTORED FLESH, AS THERE'S NO FOOD TO EAT HERE, NOR IS THERE WATER TO DRINK.

AND EVEN THOUGH OUR FLESH IS A MAGICAL FABRICATION AND OUR HUNGERS ARE IMAGINARY, THE PAIN FEELS ALL TOO REAL.



Chapter Five of The Good Prince

In which our humble janitor-turned-prince-of-ghosts becomes the star of his own show and a witch reveals big things.

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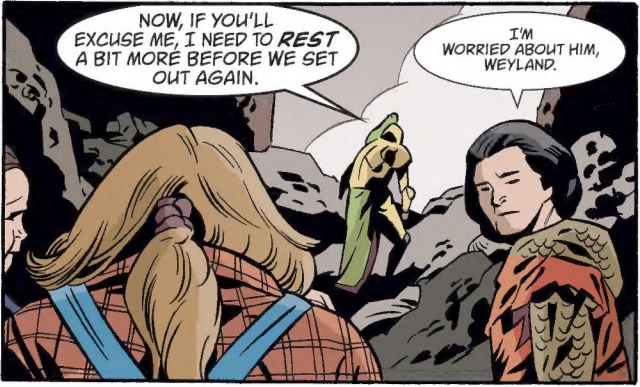
MORE OF THEM DESERT US EVERY DAY, PRINCE. THEY SLIP OFF DURING OUR SLEEP TO RETURN TO WHERE THEY CAN BECOME TRUE GHOSTS AGAIN.

BACK TO WHERE THEY CAN'T SUFFER PAIN, HUNGER, OR THIRST.



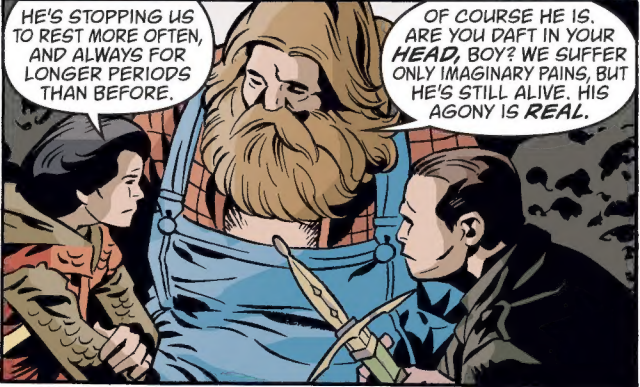
THAT'S AS IT SHOULD BE, LANCE. I THINK ONE OF THE REASONS FOR THIS LONG JOURNEY THROUGH DEAD LANDS IS TO WEED OUT THOSE WHO CAN'T TAKE THE HARDSHIPS.

THOSE WHO STAY WITH US TO JOURNEY'S END WILL BE THE ONES STRONG ENOUGH TO FACE THE TRIALS TO COME.



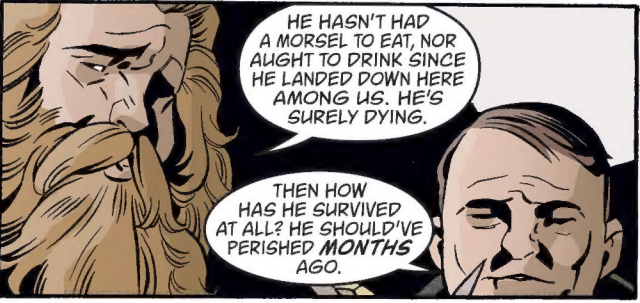
NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I NEED TO REST A BIT MORE BEFORE WE SET OUT AGAIN.

I'M WORRIED ABOUT HIM, WEYLAND.




HE'S STOPPING US TO REST MORE OFTEN, AND ALWAYS FOR LONGER PERIODS THAN BEFORE.

OF COURSE HE IS. ARE YOU DAFT IN YOUR HEAD, BOY? WE SUFFER ONLY IMAGINARY PAINS, BUT HE'S STILL ALIVE. HIS AGONY IS REAL.



HE HASN'T HAD A MORSEL TO EAT, NOR AUGHT TO DRINK SINCE HE LANDED DOWN HERE AMONG US. HE'S SURELY DYING.


THEN HOW HAS HE SURVIVED AT ALL? HE SHOULD'VE PERISHED MONTHS AGO.



I THINK HE'S BEEN DRAWING POWER FROM HIS ARMOR TO SUSTAIN HIM. BUT EVEN THAT GREAT POWER HAS ITS LIMITS.

I FEAR OUR PRINCE MAY BE DRAINING IT FASTER THAN IT CAN RENEW ITSELF.

SO WHAT DO WE DO?



WE TAKE SOME OF THE BURDEN OURSELVES, THAT'S WHAT. FROM NOW ON, WE **CARRY** HIM. AND WE DON'T LET HIM SAY OTHERWISE!

WE'LL SCAVENGE MATERIALS FROM AMONG US TO MAKE A LITTER.



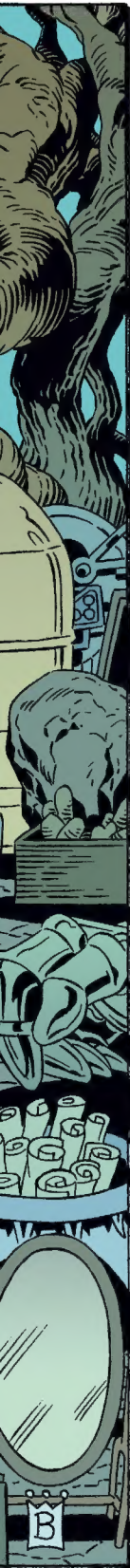
...FROM AMONG US TO MAKE A LITTER.

OH, DEAR.

FLY'S GOT HIMSELF IN QUITE A JAM.

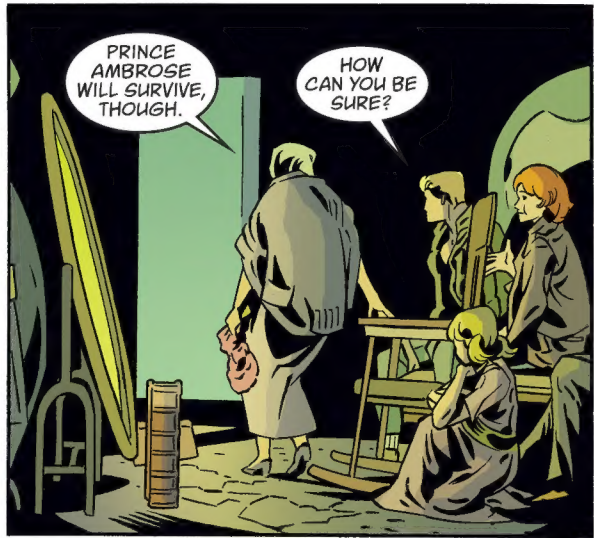
POOR, SWEET MAN.





ISN'T THERE **ANYTHING** WE CAN DO TO HELP HIM?

NOT FROM HERE. THE DEAD LANDS BELOW THE WITCHING WELL ARE BEYOND EVEN **MY** POWERS.



PRINCE AMBROSE WILL SURVIVE, **THOUGH**.

HOW CAN YOU BE **SURE**?



BECAUSE IT WOULD SPOIL TOO MANY OF **MY PLANS** IF HE DIDN'T.



I SEE THAT THE **FLYCATCHER SHOW** IS STILL GOING STRONG.

AND THIS IS THE AFTERNOON LULL. MOST OF THE TIME THERE AREN'T ANY SEATS TO BE HAD.



FRAU TOTENKINDER, MAY I SPEAK TO YOU FOR A **MOMENT**?

CERTAINLY, DEAR BOY. WALK ME TO MY APARTMENT. IT'S **NEARLY TEA TIME**.





THE IMPERIAL CITY, ADMINISTRATIVE CAPITAL OF THE WORLD-SPANNING HOMELANDS EMPIRE.

YOU'RE THE TOP RESEARCH SORCERERS THE EMPIRE HAS TO OFFER.



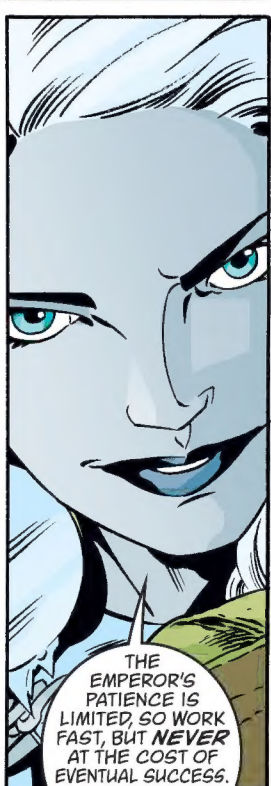
THESE ARE SOME OF THE PRESERVED REMNANTS OF THE MAGIC BEANSTALK THAT THE RAIDER WOLF USED TO ESCAPE INTO THE CLOUD KINGDOMS BEFORE HE DESTROYED IT BEHIND HIM.

YOU PEOPLE ARE GOING TO USE ALL OF YOUR SKILLS AND POWERS TO STUDY THEM.

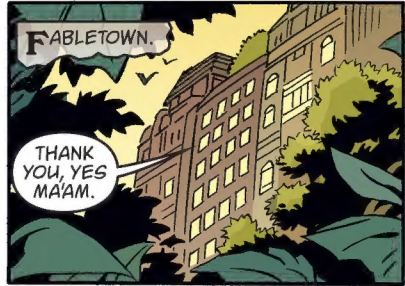
TOWARDS WHAT END, HONORED SNOW QUEEN?



YOUR ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO FIND A WAY TO CREATE MORE BEANSTALKS CAPABLE OF BREACHING THE BARRIERS BETWEEN THE EMPIRE AND THE CLOUD KINGDOMS.



THE EMPEROR'S PATIENCE IS LIMITED, SO WORK FAST, BUT NEVER AT THE COST OF EVENTUAL SUCCESS.





DO YOU HONESTLY IMAGINE THIS IS A WAR BETWEEN FABLETOWN AND THE EMPIRE?

IT ISN'T. AT BEST YOU'RE MERELY PIECES IN A GREATER GAME.

OKAY, NOW I'M **TOTALLY** CONFUSED.



EVER SINCE I KNEW OF A MYSTERIOUS CONQUEROR, THIS HAS ALWAYS BEEN A PRIVATE DUEL BETWEEN GEPPETTO AND ME.

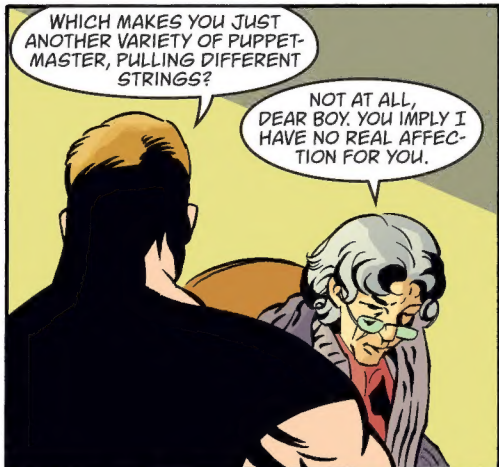
THOUGH I DIDN'T ORIGINALLY KNOW WHO HE WAS, AND HE DOESN'T YET KNOW WHO **HIS** TRUE OPPONENT IS.



FOR CENTURIES I'VE BEEN GATHERING MY STRENGTH, CAREFULLY POSITIONING MY RESOURCES.



YOU MEAN TO SAY YOU'VE BEEN **USING** US THE SAME WAY GEPPETTO USES HIS MINIONS?



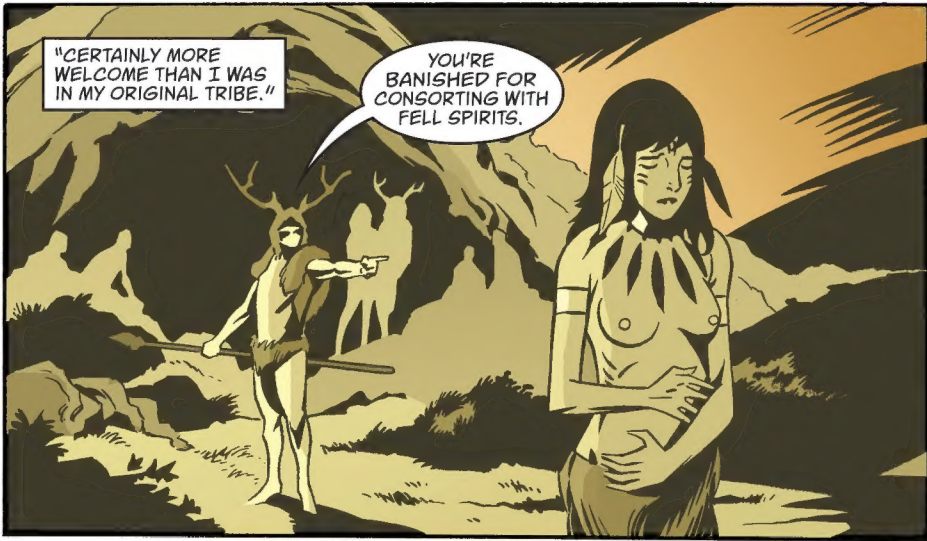
WHICH MAKES YOU JUST ANOTHER VARIETY OF PUPPET-MASTER, PULLING DIFFERENT STRINGS?

NOT AT ALL, DEAR BOY. YOU IMPLY I HAVE NO REAL AFFECTION FOR YOU.



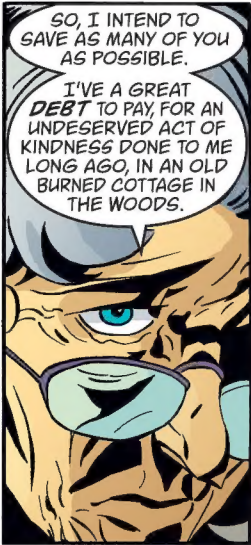
BUT IN TRUTH I'VE GROWN QUITE **FOND** OF MY COMMUNITY HERE.

YOU'VE MADE ME **EVER** SO MUCH MORE WELCOME HERE THAN I'VE EVER BEEN BEFORE.



"CERTAINLY MORE WELCOME THAN I WAS IN MY ORIGINAL TRIBE."

"YOU'RE BANISHED FOR CONSORTING WITH FELL SPIRITS."



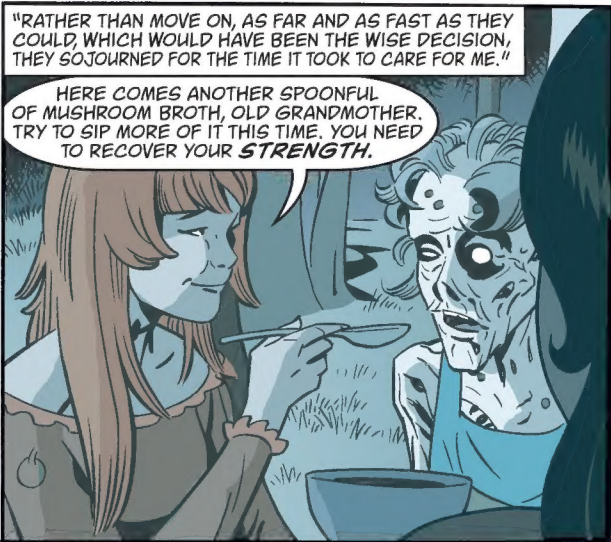
"SO, I INTEND TO SAVE AS MANY OF YOU AS POSSIBLE."

"I'VE A GREAT DEBT TO PAY, FOR AN UNDESERVED ACT OF KINDNESS DONE TO ME LONG AGO, IN AN OLD BURNED COTTAGE IN THE WOODS."



"TWO YOUNG GIRLS, ON THE RUN FROM A TERRIBLE CONQUEROR, FOUND ME IN A DIRE STATE."

"SNOW, I THINK THERE'S A BODY IN THIS OVEN."



"RATHER THAN MOVE ON, AS FAR AND AS FAST AS THEY COULD, WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN THE WISE DECISION, THEY SOJOURNED FOR THE TIME IT TOOK TO CARE FOR ME."

"HERE COMES ANOTHER SPOONFUL OF MUSHROOM BROTH, OLD GRANDMOTHER. TRY TO SIP MORE OF IT THIS TIME. YOU NEED TO RECOVER YOUR STRENGTH."

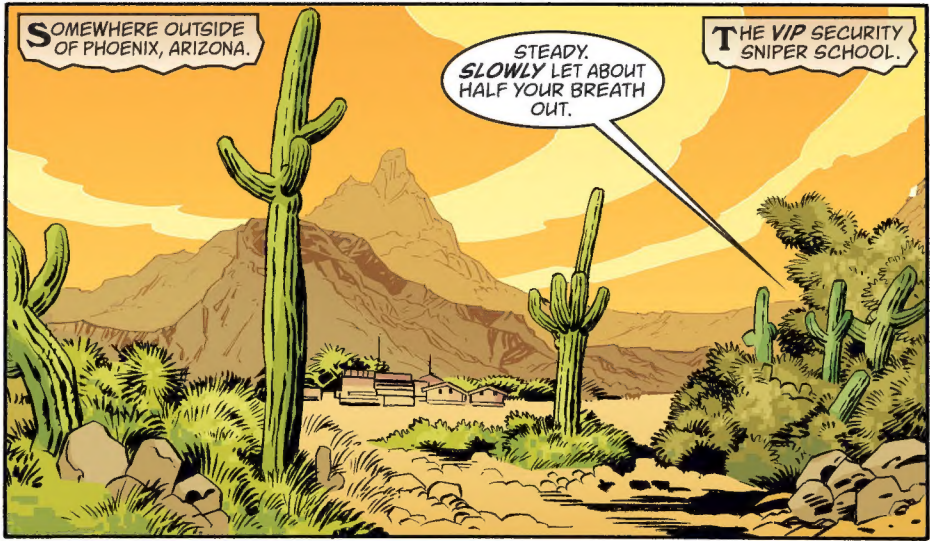


"IT WAS THEN THAT I VOWED TO MAKE THEIR ENEMY MY ENEMY AND DESTROY THE ADVERSARY, WIPING ALL HIS WORKS FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH."

SOMEWHERE OUTSIDE OF PHOENIX, ARIZONA.

STEADY. SLOWLY LET ABOUT HALF YOUR BREATH OUT.

THE VIP SECURITY SNIPER SCHOOL.



AND THEN TAKE THE SHOT WHEN YOU'RE READY.

POW!



GOT HIM.

YOU'RE NOT A HALF-BAD SHOT, MR. BROOM.



BUT YOU'LL NEED TO GET BETTER.

WHAT YOU WANT TO DO IS HIT YOUR MAN RIGHT IN THE APRICOT.

WHAT'S THAT?



B

B



IT'S WHAT WE CALL THE MEDULLA OBLONGATA, RIGHT HERE AT THE BASE OF THE BRAIN. IT'S THE BEST TARGET FOR A SNIPER BECAUSE IT KILLS INSTANTLY.

YOUR MAN WON'T HAVE TIME TO BURBLE A SINGLE SYLLABLE, MUCH LESS SHOUT A WARNING. HE'LL BE DEAD BEFORE HIS KNEES START TO BUCKLE.

YOU'VE GOT A GOOD ONE HERE, MR. HOLBER. HE'S TRAINABLE.

GLAD TO HEAR IT. NOW ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS DUPLICATE BROOM'S SUCCESS WITH ABOUT TWO HUNDRED OTHERS.



GOOD JOB, BROOM. YOU'VE EARNED YOURSELF A STEAK IN THE DINING HALL TONIGHT AND PERMISSION TO USE THE HOT SHOWERS IN CAMP.

THANKS, BIGBY.

BIGBY? I THOUGHT YOUR NAME WAS JOHN?

BIGBY'S A NICKNAME THE BOYS GAVE ME. IT STANDS FOR BIG BOSS.

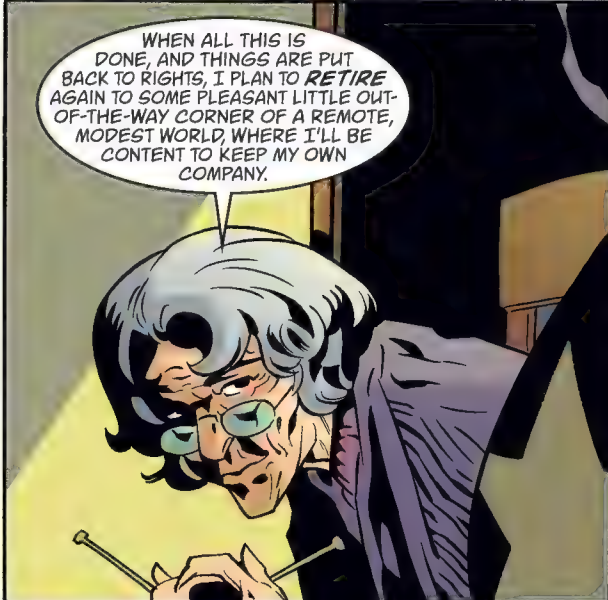
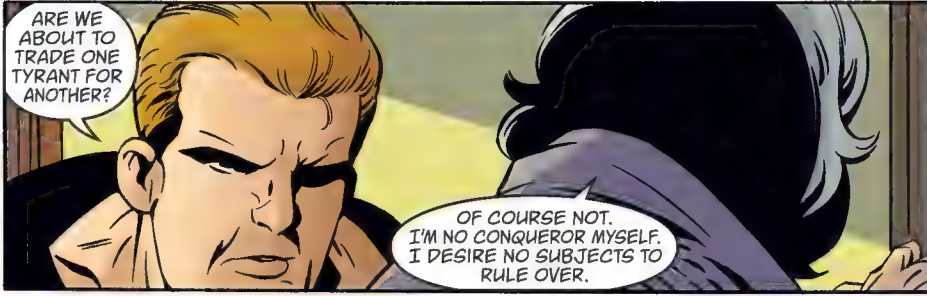


ANY OTHER FABLETOWN SECRETS YOU WANT TO DIVULGE TO THE MUNDY INSTRUCTORS, BROOM?

UH-NO, SIR. SORRY, SIR.

FORGET THE HOT SHOWER AND STEAK DINNER. IT'S CHIPPED BEEF ON TOAST FOR YOU TONIGHT.





DAYS PASS.

ONCE WE BEGAN CARRYING PRINCE AMBROSE, WE MADE BETTER TIME, COVERING MORE DISTANCE BETWEEN EACH REST.

HE PROTESTED MIGHTILY AGAINST BEING CARRIED, OF COURSE, BUT THIS IS ONE TIME WHEN MUTINY AGAINST A SOVEREIGN LEADER WAS UNQUESTIONABLY THE RIGHT THING TO DO.

THERE. GO THAT WAY.

OUR STRENGTH GREW WITH OUR MORALE, ONCE WE LEARNED WE WERE GETTING CLOSE TO JOURNEY'S END.

HEAD TOWARDS THAT GAP IN THE RIDGE LINE AHEAD.

THAT'S OUR PASSAGeway OUT OF THIS BLIGHTED LAND.



SPREAD THE WORD, PLEASE. ASK ALL OF THE BIRD FABLES TO COME TO ME.

OF COURSE, PRINCE.



YOU CAN CALL ME FLY WHEN WE'RE ALONE, JOHN. YOU ALWAYS DID IN THE OLD DAYS.

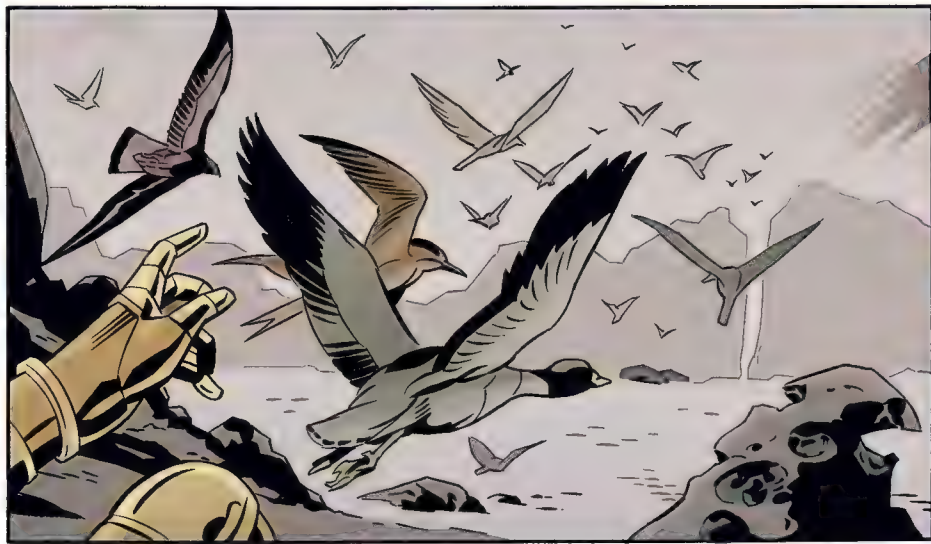
IF YOU'LL FORGIVE ME, SIR, I WASN'T IN YOUR SERVICE IN THE OLD DAYS.



AN HOUR OR SO LATER-- AS MUCH AS TIME CAN BE MEASURED IN A TIMELESS WILDERNESS.

I KNOW YOU'RE AS WEARY AS THE REST OF US-- ALMOST TOO WEARY TO FLY.

BUT I ASK YOU TO SCOUT AHEAD OF US THROUGH THE GAP AND LOOK FOR SIGNS OF LIFE AND FRESH WATER.





BLUEBEARD.

SHERE KHAN.



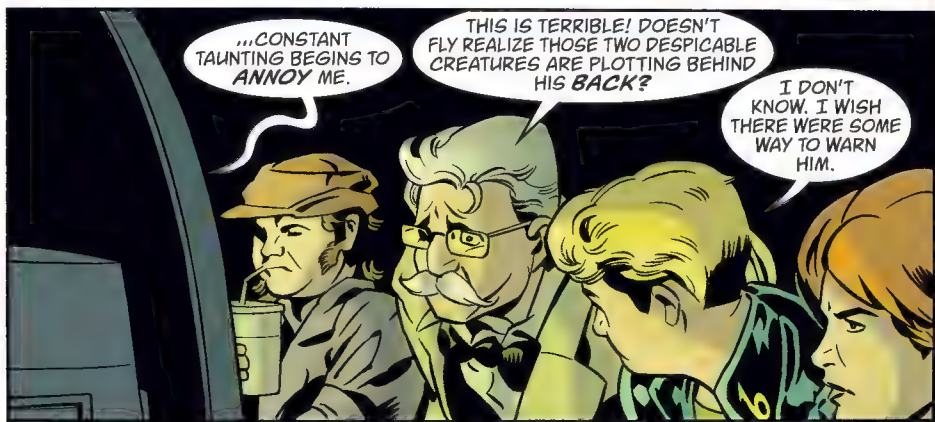
SO I SEE YOU'VE BECOME ONE OF OUR INSIPID PRINCE'S LITTER BEARERS.

IT HELPS TO INGRATIATE MYSELF FURTHER INTO HIS CONFIDENCE, AND THAT SERVES MY ULTIMATE PLANS.



EVEN SO, WHY STOP THERE? WHEN HE GROWS SO FEEBLE HE CAN'T EVEN WIPE HIS OWN PALE FRECKLED ASS, WILL YOU DO THAT FOR HIM AS WELL?

BE CAREFUL THAT YOU DON'T GO TOO FAR, SCAVENGER. YOUR CONSTANT TAUNTING BEGINS TO ANNOY ME.



...CONSTANT TAUNTING BEGINS TO ANNOY ME.

THIS IS TERRIBLE! DOESN'T FLY REALIZE THOSE TWO DESPICABLE CREATURES ARE PLOTTING BEHIND HIS BACK?

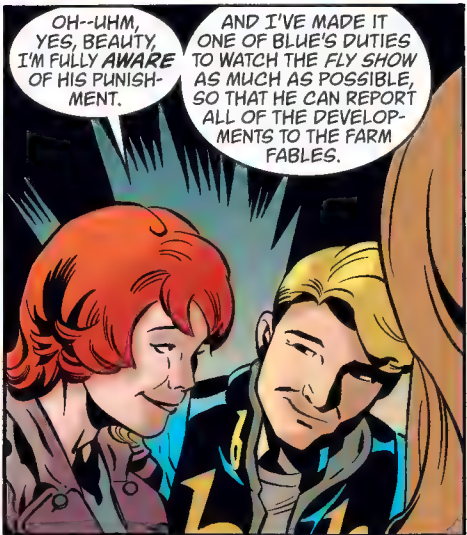
I DON'T KNOW. I WISH THERE WERE SOME WAY TO WARN HIM.





EXCUSE ME, ROSE RED, YOU AND BOY BLUE ARE DOWN HERE FROM THE FARM ONE DAY OUT OF THREE, WATCHING THE FLY SHOW.

HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THAT HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE DOING **HARD LABOR** UP THERE?



OH-UHM, YES, BEAUTY, I'M FULLY AWARE OF HIS PUNISHMENT.

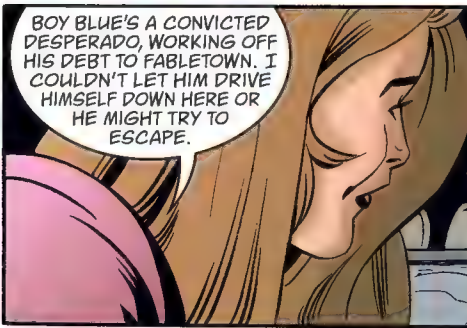
AND I'VE MADE IT ONE OF BLUE'S DUTIES TO WATCH THE FLY SHOW AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, SO THAT HE CAN REPORT ALL OF THE DEVELOPMENTS TO THE FARM FABLES.



EVERYONE UP THERE'S CRAZY FOR ALL THE LATEST NEWS FROM UNDER THE WITCHING WELL. IF THE UPDATES STOP, ALL **WORK** STOPS.



OKAY, THAT EXPLAINS BLUE'S NEED TO BE HERE-- BARELY. BUT WHAT ABOUT **YOU**? WHY DO YOU NEED TO COME DOWN HERE SO OFTEN?



BOY BLUE'S A CONVICTED DESPERADO, WORKING OFF HIS DEBT TO FABLETOWN. I COULDN'T LET HIM DRIVE HIMSELF DOWN HERE OR HE MIGHT TRY TO ESCAPE.

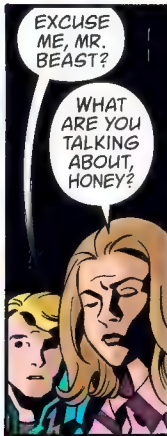


YOU TWO THINK YOU'RE SO **CLEVER**. HONEY, YOU'RE THE SHERIFF. CARE TO WADE IN ON THIS?

WHAT I CAN'T FIGURE OUT IS WHY SHE DECIDED TO TELL ME.



WHY ME? AND WHY NOW?

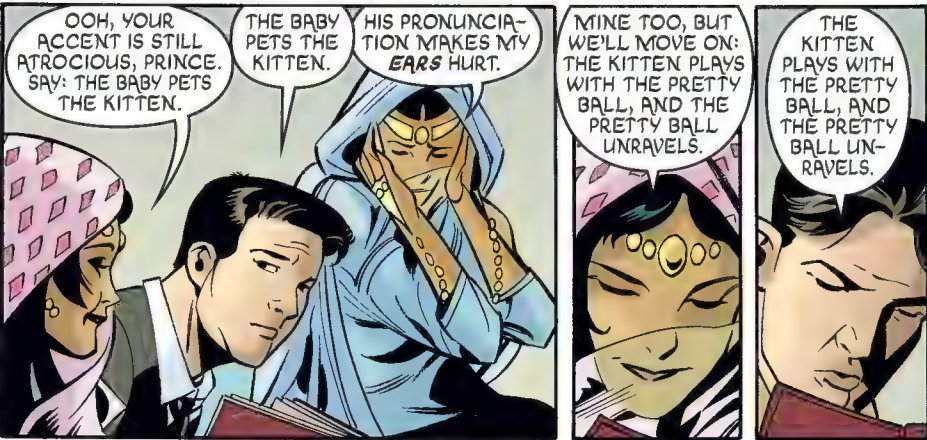
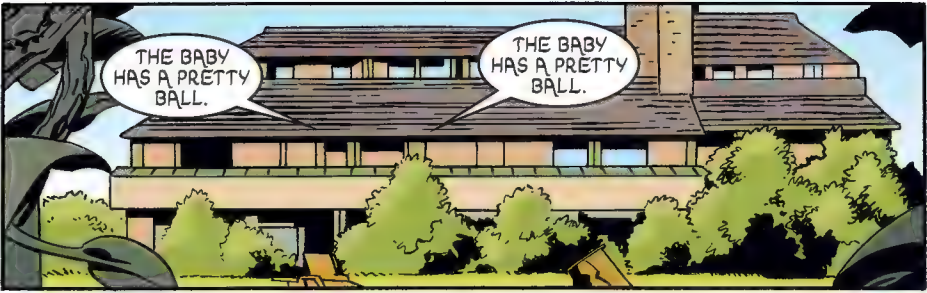


EXCUSE ME, MR. BEAST?

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, HONEY?



NEVER MIND. NOT IMPORTANT.



DAYS--OR ITS
EQUIVALENT
DOWN HERE--
PASSED.

THEN FINALLY ONE OF
THE BIRDS RETURNED.



IT'S A
TWIG.
AND IT
HAS FRESH
LEAVES ON
IT.

AND JUST LIKE
THAT OUR SPIRITS
WERE RESTORED.

YOU
SHOULD'VE SENT
THEM OUT EARLIER. LOOK
AT THE GRAND EFFECT
IT'S HAD ON OUR
MORALE.

WOULDN'T
HAVE WORKED SOONER,
OLD FRIEND. THEY WOULD
HAVE TURNED BACK INTO
GHOSTS IF THEY FLEW
TOO FAR FROM ME.



CHANGES CAME QUICKLY AFTER THAT. FIRST THE LIFELESS WASTELAND TURNED INTO SCRUB DESERT.



THEN MORE LUSH GROWTH.

EVERYTHING IS SO GREEN!



THEN WE FOUND THE RIVER--MORE OF A CREEK ACTUALLY, BUT IT WAS PURE AND SWEET WATER. WE PLAYED AND SPLASHED IN IT AND NEARLY DRANK IT DRY.




BUT THE MOST GLORIOUS PART WAS WHEN WE NOTICED THAT A NORMAL CYCLE OF NIGHT AND DAY RESUMED.

I KNOW THOSE!

THEY'RE STARS!

I REMEMBER STARS!





NO, I TAKE THAT BACK. THE MOST GLORIOUS DAY CAME WHEN WE REACHED A FOREST AND FOUND THAT MANY OF THE TREES WERE PART OF AN OLD ORCHARD.

PEACHES! THESE ARE PEACHES!

AND THERE'RE APPLES OVER THERE!



SOMETIME LONG AGO, THIS WAS THE CLEARED LAND OF AN INHABITED COUNTRY. THEN THE FOREST RECLAIMED IT.

I HAVE MORE PEARS AND PEACHES HERE, PRINCE.

NO, NOT ANOTHER BITE MORE, JOHN. I NEVER THOUGHT I COULD SAY THIS AGAIN, BUT I'M STUFFED.



WE LINGERED THERE FOR DAYS--FOR WEEKS--GETTING OUR STRENGTH BACK.

I STILL THINK YOU'RE DOING THIS TOO SOON.

I AGREE.

QUIT FUSSING AND CLUCKING AT ME LIKE MOTHER HENS! I CAN STAND ON MY OWN AGAIN.

AND DESTROY THAT LITTER. I NEVER WANT TO SEE IT AGAIN.

THEN WE SET OUT AGAIN AND AFTER MORE LONG WEEKS OF TRAVEL ARRIVED AT OUR FINAL DESTINATION. AFTER SO MANY MONTHS OF DULL GRAY WASTELANDS, THE EXPLOSION OF VIBRANT, LIVING GREEN WAS ALMOST PAINFUL TO SEE.

THIS IS IT. THIS WAS MY HOME SO LONG AGO.

IT'S ALL RUINED AND OVERGROWN NOW, BUT I CAN STILL SEE IT AS IT WAS.

THERE USED TO BE A VILLAGE OVER THERE, SNUGLING TO THE EASTERN WALL OF THE CASTLE. AND THERE WAS FARMLAND AS FAR AS THE EYE COULD SEE.

AND SOMEWHERE THROUGH THOSE TREES YOU MIGHT FIND A RIVER AND THE POND I ONCE CALLED HOME, BEFORE I MOVED INTO THE CASTLE.

HERE'S WHERE YOU'RE GOING TO BE THE MOST HELP, WEYLAND. WE'LL NEED THE CASTLE REBUILT, AND I'D LIKE MY ORIGINAL QUARTERS RESTORED, IF YOU'RE WILLING.

OF COURSE, AMBROSE!

WE LIVED IN THE SOUTH TOWER. I CAN SEE A WEE BIT OF IT STILL STANDING, I THINK.

AND WE'LL ALL NEED TO PITCH IN AND START CLEARING FARMLAND AGAIN. WE'LL NEED LOTS OF IT, BECAUSE THIS IS NOW THE CENTER OF A NEW KINGDOM, WHICH WILL GROW SURPRISINGLY FAST.

OTHERS WILL START ARRIVING SOON.




I'LL ADMIT IT THAT YOU WERE RIGHT ALL ALONG, BLUEBEARD.


WE PASSED THROUGH HELL TO GET HERE, BUT FOUND PARADISE AT THE END.



NOW WE CAN KILL THE IMBECILE PRINCE AND LIVE FREE AGAIN.




I'M NOT SO SURE THAT'S POSSIBLE, SHERE KHAN.



FLYCATCHER SAID WE'D ALL RETURN TO BEING GHOSTS WITHOUT HIM.

HE MADE MANY IMPOSSIBLE CLAIMS.

ALL OF WHICH HAVE COME TRUE SO FAR.



SO WHAT IS IT YOU PROPOSE, BRIDE-KILLER? ARE YOU GOING TO CONTINUE TO BOW AND SCRAPE BEFORE HIM AND LICK HIS HEELS?

NO, I'M GOING TO BIDE MY TIME UNTIL WE CAN LOCATE AND CONTACT ALLIES WHO ALSO HAVE THE POWER TO GRANT NEW FLESH TO OLD GHOSTS.



IF WE'RE TRULY BACK IN THE HOMELANDS, THEN FLY WILL HAVE MANY ENEMIES HERE.

MANY VERY MAGICAL ENEMIES.

NEXT: How to really anger an empire.

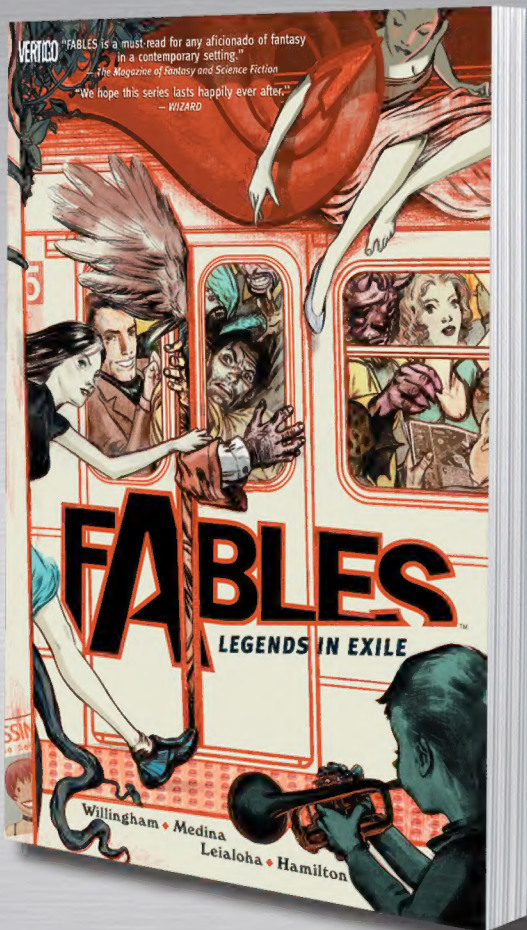
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BILL WILLINGHAM

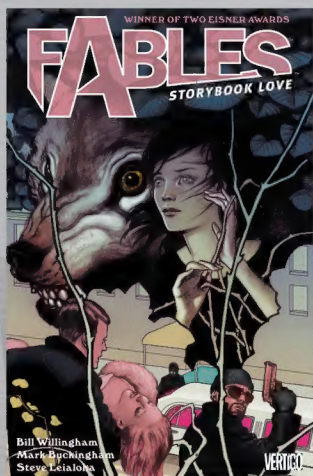
"[A] wonderfully twisted concept... features fairy tale characters banished to the noirish world of present-day New York."
– THE WASHINGTON POST



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- VOL. 11: WAR AND PIECES
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- 1001 NIGHTS OF SNOWFALL



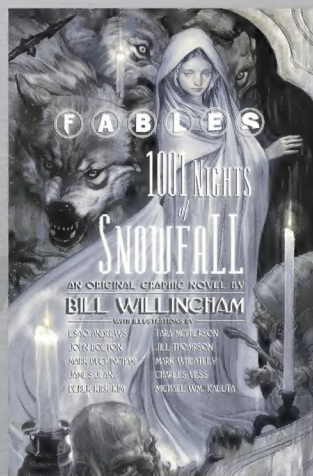
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